

The President's Daily Brief

9 May 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

There is more evidence pointing to the involvement of Vietnamese Communist main force units in military actions in the Cambodian interior. (Page 1)

Laotian Government leaders are growing more nervous over Communist military aims in the south. (Page 2)

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In South Vietnam

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(Page 3)

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Egypt seems eager for a US response to President Nasir's May Day "appeal for peace." (Page 4)

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Cambodia: Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

According to a Communist message intercepted on 7 May, elements of the 174th North Vietnamese Army Regiment reported that they had attacked and completely occupied the provincial capital of Kratie. They apparently joined elements of the 275th Viet Cong Regiment which was located within 15 miles of Kratie two days before it fell. Both the 174th and 275th Regiments are subordinate to the 5th Viet Cong Division, which operates along the northern Phuoc Long Province - Cambodian border area.

The destruction of two bridges north of Kratie on Wednesday further reduces the government's overland access to the northern provinces. The capital of Stung Treng Province and the town of Lomphat in Ratanakiri Province are now isolated and running short of food and fuel, according to an intercepted Cambodian Army message. They are requesting aerial resupply.

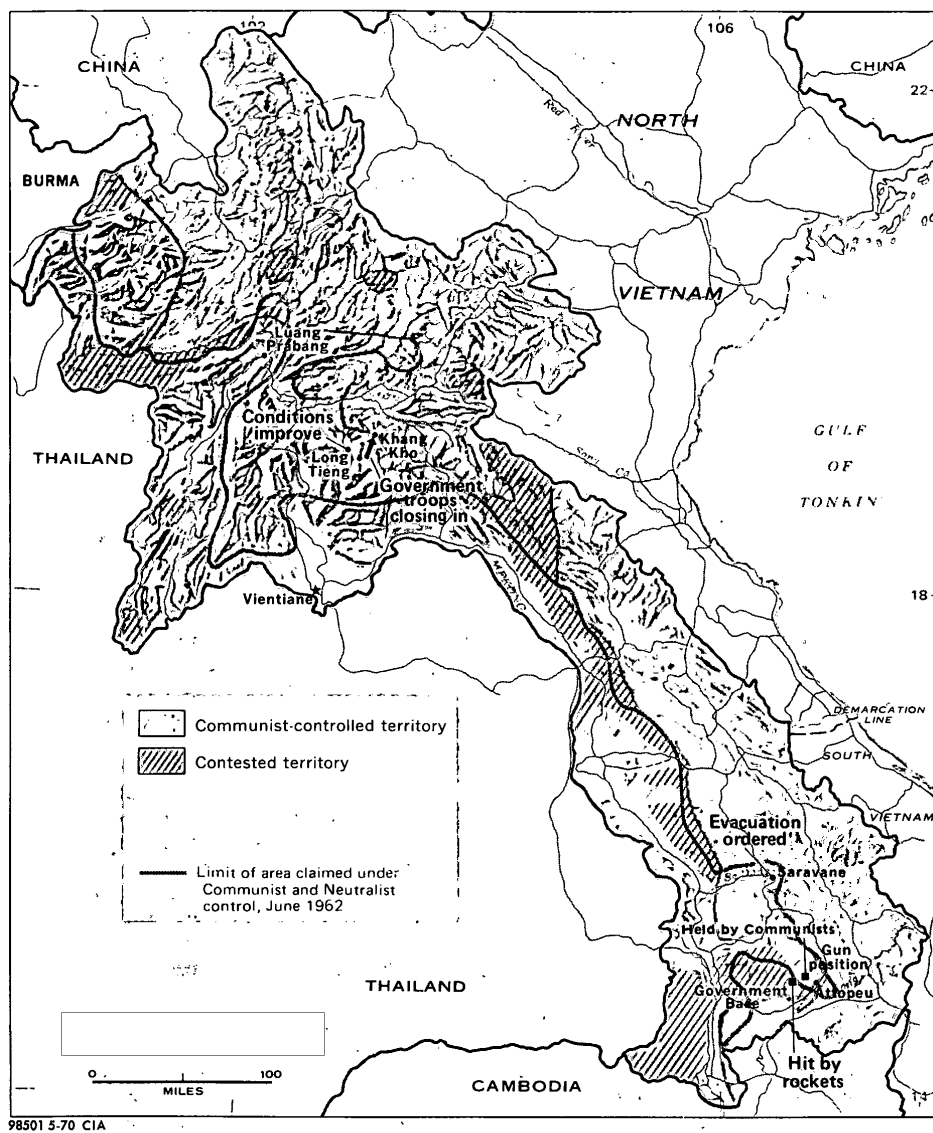
In Phnom Penh, meanwhile, a government spokesman claims that all telephone and telegraph communications with 20 major cities and towns, including all towns east of the Mekong River, are suspended because of enemy occupation or line cutting. South of the capital, however, government forces are edging toward the Neak Luong ferry following recapture of Koki Thom several miles west of the ferry. No new major Communist attacks have been reported.

[redacted] the oil refinery at Kompong Som ceased operations on 6 May because military actions had cut transportation from the port. In addition, no commercial ships have traveled up the Mekong River since mid-April, largely because its banks are occupied by Communist troops for a distance of about 20 miles upstream from the Vietnamese border. Oil shortages may soon be felt in Phnom Penh, where storage capacity is limited to a 30-day supply.

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LAOS

Government leaders are growing increasingly nervous over the military situation in the southern half of the country. This apprehension is evident in a speech prepared by the prime minister [redacted] Souvanna claims that the loss of Attopeu means the Communists have abandoned traditional restraints. One purpose of the seizure of Attopeu may have been to prompt just such a reaction in Vientiane. The government announced on 8 May that enemy forces threatening the provincial capital of Saravane necessitated its immediate evacuation.

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There are no indications in communications intelligence of unusual enemy activity in or around Saravane, but Laotian troops defending the town are reported to have received an offer of safe passage from unspecified North Vietnamese units if they abandon it.

On the southeastern edge of the Bolovens Plateau, Communist forces this morning gained control of the principal government guerrilla base in the vicinity of Attopeu. Early reports indicate that the defenders withdrew after only minimal pressure. Attopeu town and a key fire base overlooking the immediate area also remain in enemy hands.

Military spokesmen are also claiming that there is a major threat to the royal capital of Luang Prabang and have gone so far as to state that its evacuation is under active consideration.

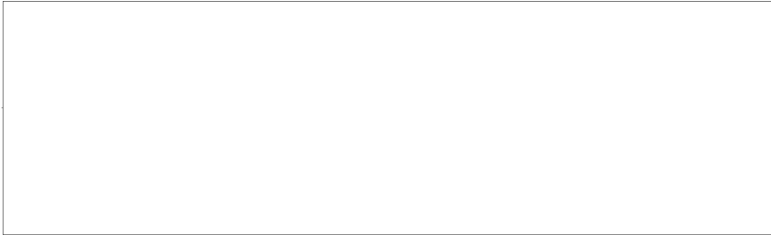
It is not clear whether such exaggerated stories reflect genuine concern or are only an indirect expression of the dissatisfaction of some military leaders at the attention that has been given to the Meo fight for Long Tieng.

At Long Tieng, the absence of a serious Communist assault on the Meo stronghold apparently has raised the morale of its defenders. Civilians have begun to filter back into the Long Tieng Valley, the base hospital has reopened, and several small markets are back in business. Government troops are reported to be closing in on Khang Kho, a guerrilla base seized by the enemy last month.

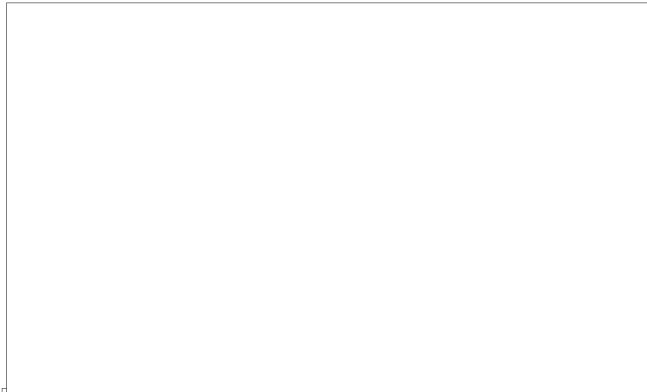
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SOUTH VIETNAM



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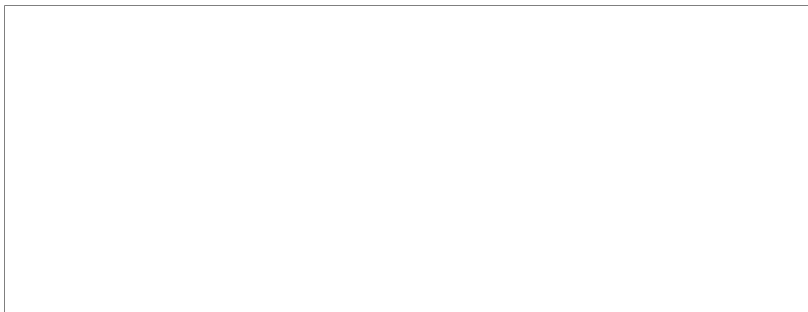


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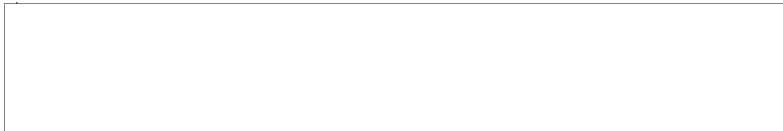


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EGYPT

Cairo appears eager for a US response to President Nasir's May Day "appeal for peace." Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmud Riyad, talking with Donald Bergus on 7 May, expressed the fear that the US would ignore Nasir's plea to keep the door open for peace in the Middle East. He also was interested in any new implications for peace that might be behind Foreign Minister Eban's assertion that Israel would make "surprising" concessions in any peace talks with the Arabs.

Although Nasir probably does still hold some slight hope for a peaceful settlement, this approach seems more an attempt to draw new, more pro-Arab, proposals from the US than a reflection of any give in the Egyptian position.

An additional incentive for the Egyptian initiative may be a desire to maintain at least some ties and residual influence with the US. Nasir no doubt realizes that a US announcement of additional military aid to Israel would seriously damage the US position in the Arab world and force him to adopt an even more militant anti-US stance.

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